

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Overview

Claims 1-9 and 11-49 are pending in the application. Claims 2-9 and 25-44 were previously withdrawn from consideration, and claims 10 and 50-56 were previously canceled. No amendments have been made to the claims by this response.

Reconsideration and reexamination of the application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Claim Rejections

Claims 1, 11-12, 14-16, 20, 22-24, 45-46, 48 and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,510,778 to Cotton ("Cotton") in view of DE4228469 to Dreher ("Dreher"). Claims 1, 11-16, 20-24 and 45-49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 3,811,198 to Baltes ("Baltes") in view of Dreher. Claims 17-19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cotton or Baltes in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,720,108 to Rice ("Rice") as evidenced by Baltes and U.S. Patent No. 5,466,058 to Chan ("Chan"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections, and request reconsideration of the claims.

The §103 Rejection of Claim 1 Over Cotton in view of Dreher

Claims 1, 11-12, 14-16, 20, 22-24, 45-46, 48 and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Cotton in view of Dreher. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Initially, it should be noted that the present Office Action recites the number DE9013620U in reference to Dreher. It is believed that the Examiner intended to recite DE4228469 in connection with this rejection over Dreher, and the present response has been prepared accordingly.

Cotton teaches separate laundry appliances, each having a cabinet and arranged in various configurations with respect to one another. In one disclosed orientation, a dryer is mounted on a support stand such that it resides above a washer. In other disclosed orientations, washer and dryer units are merely arranged in a side-by-side orientation, as would be common within a room. These discrete appliances are linked to one another through a shared microcontroller for controlling the laundering operations.

Cotton does not teach or suggest an integrated cabinet assembly comprising a plurality of panels that define a plurality of discrete spaces as recited in claim 1. As Cotton does not teach or suggest the integrated cabinet assembly, it follows that Cotton does not teach or suggest a washer discrete space so dimensioned as to house a washing machine; or a clothes dryer discrete space so dimensioned as to house a clothes dryer. Cotton merely teaches individual washer and dryer units which are linked to one another through a shared microcontroller for controlling the laundering operations.

Dreher teaches a shelf that is slidable into and out of a washing machine. Dreher does not correct the deficiencies of Cotton, and Dreher does not teach or suggest a slidable shelf that is slidable into and out of an integrated cabinet assembly as recited in claim 1.

For any one of the above-listed reasons, the combination of Cotton and Dreher fails to make out a case of *prima facie* obviousness of claim 1 such that claim 1 should be deemed allowable over the cited combination. As claims 11-12, 14-16, 20, 22-24, 45-46, 48 and 49 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1, they too should be deemed allowable over the combination of Cotton and Dreher.

The §103 Rejection Over Baltes in view of Dreher

Claims 1, 11-16, 20-24 and 45-49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Baltes in view of Dreher. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Baltes discloses a drying closet for drying laundry and the like. The drying closet comprises a rear wall with an inner wall panel (9), a door (7) as a front wall, and two side walls 4 that define an interior (21). Fans (11) compress and pump drying air that flows through interior (21), and the air can be heated by a heater element (12). Figure 13 shows an example of the installation of the drying closet; no

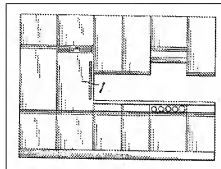


FIG. 13 OF BALTES

further information is given regarding Figure 13. The only other reference to the installation of the drying closet in the specification is at column 7, lines 19-25: "It is of particular advantage that the laundry drying closet according to the invention because of its small depth and its ideal installation dimensions may be installed in modular kitchens or, e.g., in bathrooms at a place above the tub, whereby the depth, height and width dimensions correspond to the standard dimensions of modular components." Exemplary dimensions for the drying closet are 350 mm (13.8 inches) deep by 1150 mm (45.3 in) tall by 600 mm (23.6 in) wide.

The combination of Baltes and Dreher does not disclose every element of claim 1 and, therefore, does not establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness with respect to claim 1. The illustration in Figure 13 of Baltes does not provide any information about the structure surrounding the drying closet. The specification refers to an installation of the drying closet in a kitchen or bathroom but does not relate this description to Figure 13. The specification does not teach that the structure surrounding the drying closet is a cabinet assembly comprising panels defining discrete spaces. However, if Applicants are to assume that the structure surrounding the drying closet comprises panels defining discrete spaces, which is not disclosed in Baltes but is assumed in the Office Action, we still are ignorant of the sizes of the spaces and whether they are so dimensioned as to house a washing machine or a clothes dryer. The drawing in Figure 13 is not to scale; the height to width ratio of the dimensions given in the specification for the drying closet is 1.92 (45.3 in/23.6 in), while the height to width ratio of the drying closet in Figure 13 is 1.74 (1.08 in/0.62 in). Because the drawing is not to scale, meaningful information regarding the

sizes of the spaces cannot be extracted from the drawing. Even if the drawing was to scale, the drawing is two-dimensional and does not provide any information regarding the depth of the spaces. It is not even possible to tell from the figure the depths of the spaces relative to the depth of the drying cabinet. Baltes, therefore, does not disclose the claimed washer discrete space so dimensioned as to house a washing machine or clothes dryer discrete space so dimensioned as to house a clothes dryer. While Applicants respectfully disagree that the limitations in claim 1 only provide intended use as asserted in the Office Action, if the claim is interpreted in this manner, the prior art structure is not capable of performing the intended use and does not meet the claim, even when employing the assumptions made in the Office Action regarding Figure 13.

Dreher teaches a shelf that is slidable into and out of a washing machine. Dreher does not teach or suggest a slidable shelf that is slidable into and out of an integrated cabinet assembly as recited in claim 1. Additionally, Dreher fails to correct the deficiencies of Baltes as discussed above.

For any one of the above-listed reasons, the combination of Baltes and Dreher fails to make out a case of *prima facie* obviousness as the combination fails to teach all the limitations of claim 1. As such, claim 1 should be deemed allowable over the cited combination. As claims 11-16, 20-24 and 45-49 depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1, they too should be deemed allowable over the combination of Baltes and Dreher.

The §103 Rejection of Claims 17-19 Over Baltes

Claims 17-19 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cotton or Baltes in view of Rice as evidenced by Baltes and Chan.

Applicants assume the Examiner intended to additionally recite Dreher in this obviousness rejection of claims 17-19. At any rate, claims 17-19 depend indirectly from claim 1 and are, therefore, not obvious over the recited combinations for at least the same reasons presented above with respect to Cotton in view of Dreher, and Baltes in view of Dreher.

Conclusion

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to all of the outstanding rejections, and Applicants therefore respectfully request that this amendment be entered.

No fees or extensions of time are believed to be due in connection with this filing. However, please consider this a request for any extension inadvertently omitted, and charge any additional fees to Deposit Account No. 23-1660.

It is respectfully submitted that the claims are allowable over the prior art of record. Early notification of allowability is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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